

University Library, Cambridge
23 April 1869

Dear Sir,

I have just seen the
etthe noum with your request
that I should say something
about the prior critics and
the Testament of Love.

I will try and write a few
lines next week, which I
hope will show that the slight
was entirely unintentional on
my part, & probably also on
the part of the writer of the
Early English Text Society's Report.

Meanwhile I need hardly
say how extremely sorry I am
that I should have been, however
unconsciously,

the cause of any annoyance or
vexation to one who has done so
much for reviving & keeping
up the interest in old English
literature as yourself.

I am not a member of the
Early English Text Society, so that
it is a mere chance if I see any
of their Reports or publications,
and it is most unfortunate that
the vague words prior critics
should not have attracted my
attention sooner.

The fact is, that I have been
so constantly for the last six years
dinning into the ears of all whom
I come across — Mr. Furnivall & Mr.
R. Morris among the number — the
total want of trustworthy evidence
in favour of attributing to Chaucer any

of the following pieces:

The Romanunt of the Rose

The Court of Love

The Cuckow & the Nightingale

Chaucer's Dream

The Flower & the Leaf

The Testament of Love

The Complaint of the Black Knight

and other smaller pieces, both from an external & an internal examination of them — and that not as a discovery of my own, but as self-evident to any one who will take the trouble to apply the simplest canons of criticism to the subject — that it seems that the writer of the EETS Society Report had begun to fancy that this was the recognised view.

Living as I do in charge of a large library, where all I find is instantly at the service of my neighbours,

I find but little leisure to put my
results into print, & I have to content
myself with the humbler position
of helping students by oral communication;
but I am only too thankful to find
from such men as Ebert, Hertzberg
& yourself, independent confirmation
of my results the moment any of
you apply your criticism to the
point. I should be the last to
wish to deprive you of the credit
of being the first to notice in print
the incongruity of calling the Vest
of Gore, Chaucers.

We were hoping some year
or more ago, ~~that~~ to have the
pleasure of seeing you as a visitor
at this library, but I fear that in
your own special line of work our
collection is hardly to be considered
worth such a long journey.

Yours most truly
J. Payne Collier Esq. Henry Bradshaw.